

UNTITLED GOTHIC WESTERN 2025

Written by

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"The angel Gabriel from heaven came; his wings as drifted
snow, his eyes as flame."

- Gabriel's Message, c.1582

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FADE IN:

EXT. HIGH MOUNTAIN DESERTS - DAY - EST.

Expansive and picturesque terrain of rolling hills with bordering mountains. Pines and sage mix with yellow sand.

SUPER: 1867, TWO YEARS AFTER THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR.

There's a trail through the trees. A skinny MAN strolls here, quite the elegant gent clothed in formal Victorian trappings, complete with black top hat and small square-lensed spectacles. At his hip is a holstered "Big Iron," a modified Colt Walker .454 revolver, shiny.

The man walks with smile and purpose, face nearly obscured by bushy beard and serious mustache. The hair of his head is quite long, and bangs droop nearly across his spectacles.

This is Tate Winston. He carries a long ebon cane, focused on whatever's ahead of him.

A horse and rider burst onto the trail. Tate doesn't startle and simply stops to observe the rider bolting past. The rider is a cowboy, the two men tip hats.

Tate continues, rounds a rocky corner and enters...

EXT. TOWN OF SPERRY

Streets bustle with wagons and TOWNSFOLK.

Tate walks, observes everything around him. He smiles at random PASSERSBY. He moves to a wooden sidewalk, passes feed shoppes, a livery, couple saloons. At one saloon Tate stops and opens the door-shutter with a push of his cane.

INT. SALOON - TATE'S POV

Fairly run-down and dead. A middle-aged BARTENDER sits on a stool, lights a cigar. He looks up.

BARTENDER

Help ya?

Tate smiles, tips his brim, looks around a bit more and is on his way. A few steps from the saloon he pulls from his waist a watch on a chain. He examines it, looks around.

The sidewalk before him immediately rumbles with a parade of SCHOOLCHILDREN, led by a 20-ish SCHOOLMARM. Her kids look neat and organized.

SCHOOLMARM
(to Tate, apologetic)
Pardon, sir.

The kids file past, nearly all ignore Tate, who smiles approvingly, watches the procession.

TATE
Mighty fine.

Tate's voice is pure Southern affluence. Strongly "Genteel". He continues on his way, rounds a building and enters...

ACTIVE MAIN STREET

The town's hotel and other establishments. Off by itself is a large fancy bank: FIRST TRUST NATIONAL.

Tate stops, straightens his jacket and moves forward. His stare is unbroken, on a beeline for the bank.

VARIOUS ANGLES: Mean-looking ARMED COWBOYS, four in all, carefully watch an unaware Tate from their respective stationary positions. Each of the cowboys are obviously trying to blend with the town, observing Tate as they do.

Tate mounts the wooden sidewalk, enters the bank.

INT. FIRST TRUST BANK

A check gate, barred and locked, along with a YOUNG GUARD carrying slung rifle and holstered pistol. Beyond the gate is the bank proper, an INTERIOR BANK GUARD, a few PATRONS here and there, and a small line of TELLERS.

YOUNG GUARD
Afternoon.

TATE
And quite spectacular, wouldn't you say?

YOUNG GUARD
Yessir, it is. You'll have to check your weapon here, sir.

TATE
Indeed.

Tate pulls his Colt sidearm, offers it to the young guard, grip first. The guard takes it, whistles.

YOUNG GUARD
She's a beauty.

Tate smiles. The guard rattles keys, unlocks the gate. It swings with a squeak.

The guard turns to stash Tate's weapon, and notices a name engraved on the weapon's barrel:

VICEROY.

YOUNG GUARD (CONT'D)
(whispered)
Oh, no.

The young guard turns to take action... And his eyes go wide.

Tate has stabbed the young guard directly under the sternum. Tate makes a strong jerky move, and we know his blade has pierced the young man's heart.

The guard goes limp, Tate pulls his knife, lies the boy down, wipes the bloody blade on the boy's jacket.

TATE
You just rest now. You just rest.

Tate stands, assesses. No one's seen. Tate collects and holsters his VICEROY sidearm, moves to the barred gate.

TATE (CONT'D)
Guard! Oh, guard!
(interior bank guard looks over)
Something's happened to the young man, here!

The interior guard quickly moves to the barred gate, sees the young guard in a slump. Interior guard opens the gate with his own set of keys, dashes in.

TATE (CONT'D)
He was talkin' and just dropped stone asleep.

The interior guard bends over the body of his co-worker. As he does, Tate moves behind him, raises his knife to his own lips, mischievously hesitates.

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF BANK

One of the suspicious cowboys has the bank entrance under scrutiny via telescope. He thinks, then whistles loudly. The other cowboys cock their weapons, move forward stealthily.

INT. BANK

Tate enters the bank, carefully locks the secondary internal gate. Behind him, through the bars, WE SEE the pair of bank guards dead, corpses arranged to appear amorous.

Tate brushes himself, stops, produces a cigarette, lights with a match from his front pocket. He tosses the match, puffs, scans around. He holds the cigarette in a Euro manner.

Across the bank a MANAGER appears from a back room, crosses behind the tellers.

TATE
Mr. Bank Manager, sir!

The manager stops, sees Tate. At first he smiles wide. As Tate approaches, the manager sees VICEROY, freezes.

TATE (CONT'D)
Now, no need for all that. Come.
Let's have a little chat.

Tate playfully motions the manager forward, with an index finger. The manager does so, and by now the tellers sense something amiss.

MANAGER
What...how may I help you, sir?

TATE
Let me count the ways, my good man.

Tate speedily pulls his Colt, presses the barrel to the manager's right jugular. Tellers and patrons panic.

TATE (CONT'D)
(loudly)
Oh, quiet down.

MANAGER
Whatever you want...

Tate cocks the Colt, the manager visibly trembles.

MANAGER (CONT'D)
Please.

TATE
Say it again.

MANAGER
Please.

Tate fire, the manager's throat splits in a fan of gore. The whole place goes crazy.

Tate is casual about affairs, re-holsters his pistol and fishes around behind his suit coat, under his shirt.

As patrons try in vain to escape the bank, Tate pulls a strangely thin bottle, stoppered with a handkerchief. He lights the kerchief with his cigarette. It catches easily.

TATE
How very engaging.

Tate turns, does a gentle underhand toss of the bottle toward the guard gate. The bottle hits the floor and shatters, the now flaming liquid fairly explodes. Fire spreads.

Tate turns, strolls toward the manager office. He gracefully jumps the bank partition, makes way.

INT. MANAGER'S OFFICE

A desk with a couple framed Daguerreotype photos of the manager and his family. Also here is an unfinished cup of coffee, and a sweet roll with a bite out of it.

Tate sits at the desk, takes one of the manager's family pictures in hand. He examines it, lays it down.

Tate collects the manager's coffee, drinks from it as if his own. He puts his feet on the desk, looks around the office.

Outside the office door the bank burns, tellers and patrons effectively trapped. And desperate.

Tate drinks more coffee and ponders the office layout. He stands, walks to a large and open safe. Inside are bags of gold, some bundled bills, a manifest. Tate ignores it all, strokes his chin and considers.

TATE
Where, oh, where?

Tate stops, awash in understanding. Back to the manager's desk. A WOMAN appears in the doorway, frantic and sooty.

WOMAN
Help us! Please!

Tate casually pulls his .454 and plugs the woman's forehead. She flops backward, quite dead.

TATE
Shush.

Tate holsters his weapon as fires thrash beyond the door. Smoke is coming.

Tate feels beneath the manager's desk. He smiles, tugs, then pulls from under the desk a little black box. It's maybe the size of a bar of soap, stamped with "Asscher Company" in tiny silver lettering. He opens it, we do not see the contents.

Tate stands, turns to leave. Flames consume most of the bank, and smoke rolls heavy.

TATE (CONT'D)
Uh oh.

Tate slides his pant leg, reveals a half stick of dynamite. He pulls the stick, lights it, tosses it to a wall.

Tate casually ducks down behind the manager's desk. The dynamite EXPLODES, blows a slight tiny hole through the bank's plaster and concrete.

TATE (CONT'D)
Oh, bother. That *is* small.

Tate stoops down to the hole. It's barely sized enough for him to squeeze through, but he does, and is outside.

EXT. TOWN

Tate stands, brushes himself. People run amok, try to do something about the burning bank. Tate strolls around the side of the bank, toward the street where he started.

From Tate's flank appear three running DEPUTIES, hands on pistols. They stride right past Tate.

Then all at once the deputies stop. There's a beat, they turn to face Tate, incredulous.

DEPUTY #1
Well kiss my ass. Tate Winston.

DEPUTY #2
Nice duds there, Winston.

TATE

Yes, well I do try.

A few uneventful beats as the deputies whisper to one another, without taking their eyes from Tate.

TATE (CONT'D)

If you men are just gonna stand there and gossip, then you won't mind if I continue about my business.

DEPUTY #1

We're all just tryin'a figure out which one of us is gonna get the pleasure of puttin' you dead in the ground.

TATE

But my weapon is tucked away, in its bed.

DEPUTY #1

Don't matter. Dog like you don't deserve nothin' but—

On this, Tate, in a calm, methodic, blinding move, unholsters his .454 and plugs each deputy in the chest. They fall like tin solders, all seemingly dead.

Tate moves on, casually reloads. As he passes the clump of bodies, he notices a deputy still alive, softly moaning. The deputy's hat lies in the dust, beside his body.

Tate watches the deputy a moment, then moves on. A few steps away, Tate stops and shakes his head.

TATE

No. Not today.

Tate goes back to the suffering deputy, shoots him in the head. Tate takes the top hat off his own head, puts it on what's left of the dead deputy. He then takes the deputy's hat, wears it, walks away.

EXT. STREETS BEFORE BANK

Tate comes around the bank's corner. The previous armed cowboy on the roof spots him, fires two shots in the air.

On this the three armed cowboys below jump from their hiding and assemble in a triangular formation, street centre.

Tate doesn't pay much mind, produces his pocket watch and checks the hour.

The town goes bonkers attending the bank fire. As people dash to and fro, a four-horse buckboard comes careening around a corner with a solitary DRIVER.

The roof cowboy scrambles down a drainpipe to the ground.

The buckboard wagon speeds to a spot between the three cowboys, stops. The cowboys move in close to the wagon, eyes scanning the streets. The roof cowboy joins.

And now the law comes: Four DEPUTIES, three on horses and one on the ground.

The cowboys open fire, and the deputies return. A couple BYSTANDERS take hits, go down. One cowboy gets popped, but the lawmen gain little ground, losing a man with the balance running for cover.

Tate approaches the buckboard, casually undoes the bottom two buttons of his velvety coat. Amidst the gunfire and relative insanity, Tate hops into the back of the buckboard and has a seat Native-style.

The four cowboys jump into the buckboard and away it goes, haulin' ass from the scene. Lawmen emerge running after, firing angrily...but it's far too late.

EXT. TOWN OF SPERRY - DAY

The Tate buckboard cruises through and out of town. The cowboys cheer and holler. Except for Tate, who just sort of sits and smiles.

COWBOY #1
We got horses outside town, boss.

TATE
Excellent. Much more of this buckboard and I'd be driven to an early grave, I just know it.

The men chuckle. Tate looks toward the receding town, in blank thought.

TATE (CONT'D)
The people of that town are evil. I despise their pretense. Both now and before.

Tate's men say nothing. The buckboard speeds from Sperry, takes a trail through an apple grove.

TIME CUT:

EXT. BORDER TOWN - SUNSET

Barren desert, long shadows.

A rim of blinding red-white sun burns the horizon.

A few scattered buildings form the border town. Visible is a small hotel, saloon, and a couple businesses.

From a trail comes the hard-riding Tate, now on his own horse, an absolutely black Dutch Warmblood stallion. Tate speeds toward the so-called town, stops.

Tate has stripped most of his Victorian wear, but retains the square-lensed spectacles. He scans the area, wipes his brow. He checks his pocket watch, shakes his head.

A few beats and the rest of Tate's men appear on horses, from the same trail. They mass around.

TATE

About time.

COWBOY #2

Aw, boss! Ain't nothin' can beat that horse of yours. Sides, we're tired.

TATE

As am I, Ned. As am I. This magnificent little town, however, will provide all we need in way of food, drink, and recovery.

(Tate trots toward town)
You men are on your own until midnight, at which time we'll meet at the Horn saloon.

(stops, turns)
Oh. Try to be... *Inconspicuous?*

Tate continues on, rounds a building and disappears.

COWBOY #1

Well, how do you like that?

COWBOY #2

Aw, he knows what he's doin'.
C'mon, boys.

They move off.

TIME CUT:

EXT. BORDER TOWN - NIGHT - EST.

An absolute gale of a wind screams through the tiny town.
Dust and tumbleweed chokes the air.

INT. HORN SALOON

A virtual cave. A bearded HARMONICA PLAYER does a strangely upbeat tune from a corner perch.

Ugly miniature kerosene lamps sit on the bar at intervals.
The whole place creaks a bit from the wild winds outside.

Around the place sit a couple TRAIL TRAMPS and other small clusters of RIDING MEN. At a table near the front sit Winston's gang, all in different but similar clothes as before. They drink and smoke.

COWBOY #1
(addresses buckboard driver)

Yeah, but we ain't got that long to go, Sam. So have a drink, dammit.

SAM
Already had a drink. What I want is my pay. Drivin' almost two days, hardly no chow.

COWBOY #2
Aw, what the hell you gonna do back in Tulsa, anyway?

COWBOY #1
Fuck sheep.

They all laugh.

On this, Tate enters. He's now in standard cowboy gear, except he wears black pants and a black leather vest. His monstrously bushy face and long hair seem wilder than before, perhaps from the wind.

Tate has a seat. No exchange for a couple beats, then...

TATE
Evenin' men.

A soft chorus of "Evenin' Boss/Evenin' Tate."

TATE (CONT'D)
 I see you're well about the task of
 nourishment.
 (lifts a bottle, sniffs)
 You men certainly did fine
 yesterday.

COWBOY #2
 Hell, boss, we didn't do nothin'
 but stand around.

TATE
 My dear sir, that's exactly what
 you were *supposed* to do. Now, then.

Tate produces the small black Asscher Company box. He puts it on the table.

TATE (CONT'D)
 And there it is.

SAM
 What the hell?

COWBOY #1
 Shut up, Sam.

TATE
 No, now, I do understand why you'd
 think me crazy. The box is, after
 all, rather tiny.

Tate opens the little box. Inside is an array of brilliant diamonds on black velvet, all of random size and cut.

TATE (CONT'D)
 Behold.

SAM
 Praise Jesus.

TATE
 No, praise *me*. And dear Doctor
 Howard, former curator and well-
 dressed patron of the diamonds,
 involuntary as he may have been.

Smiles from the men. On this a couple TRAIL TRAMPS move from the depths of the saloon and toward the bar, where they catch the slightly wind-flickering light rays of bar lamps. They stand there, look over their shoulders at Tate and his men.

SAM

Those diamonds sure seem nice.
Couple are kinda blue-lookin'.

TATE

Yes, well, these days diamonds
aren't worth what they used to be.
But *these* are what's called "royal
collection". So to speak.
Exquisitely valuable.

COWBOY #2

Then we're rich. No question.

TATE

True. But that's hardly the point.

SAM

If'n that ain't the point, what is?

TATE

Sam, allow me to demonstrate.

Tate takes the box, counts the diamonds.

TATE (CONT'D)

Hmm. Sixteen.

Tate separates the gems. He hands them off.

TATE (CONT'D)

Three for you, Ned. And there's
three for Tom. Three for Sam. And
three each for John and Bower.

The men are all a'daze.

TATE (CONT'D)

Oh, but fiddle-dee-dee. That leaves
one extra. What to do?

(beat)

I know.

Tate unseats, moves to the bar, signals the bartender.

TATE (CONT'D)

Innkeeper!

The TENDER comes. He's perhaps 63, bald, clean shaven.

SALOON TENDER

What'll it be, partner?

TATE
Have a diamond.

Tate puts the diamond on the bar. Tender's not impressed.

SALOON TENDER
Can't take that as payment.

TATE
I'm not thirsty. That's yours.

The tender just stands there, wondering. He eyes the diamond.

SALOON TENDER
Don't want any trouble now,
partner.

TATE
No, no, no, sir, you obviously
misunderstand my intent. *This*. Is a
diamond. A much-coveted gem. It's
yours. I don't want it anymore.
However, if you're the bashful
type, I'll just pass it to these
two elite gentlemen on my left.

The two ragged trail tramps study Tate. Cold, hard men. The tender moves forward a very cautious step. He looks at the diamond, desire kicking-in.

SALOON KEEPER
No catch?

Tate shakes his head. He then leans forward into the lamp light, his features now clearly visible. He smiles wide.

TATE
All settled, then?

The tender stiffens up, falters. He's recognized Tate.

SALOON KEEPER
Yes. Of course, sir. Thank you.

TATE
Don't mention it.

Tate walks away, the tender is paralyzed with fright. He exchanges glances with the trail tramps.

Tate joins his men again, smiling. He sits, looks them over.

COWBOY #1
You okay, boss?

TATE

Oh, surely Tom, you know I've never
been about this life for the money.
Were that the case, landsakes, I'd
have retired years ago.

SAM

Sir, then...if it ain't the
money...?

The two trail tramps move from the bar, toward Tate's table.
Tate's men go on alert, but are seasoned enough not to panic.
Tate grabs a whiskey bottle, pours himself a drink. He does
not look at the trail tramps.

TATE

You men thirsty?

The tramps say nothing.

TATE (CONT'D)

Cat got your tongues?

TRAMP #1

You're Tate Winston, ain't ya?

TATE

Some would say.

TRAMP #1

We heard you was here.

TATE

Oh? From whom.

TRAMP #2

Just heard.

TATE

How very intriguing.

TRAMP #1

But how do we know you ain't some
bar-hauntin' cowpunch just grown
his hair and claimin' whatever? Can
you prove it?

TATE

Need I?

TRAMP #2

Maybe. We got a job we—

On this, Tate springs from his chair and like a hairy lightning bolt has his .454 under Tramp #1's nose, the muzzle pointed square at tramp #2.

A beat or two. The tramps are frozen. Tate's men scan the room, looking for a possible flanking action. But nothing in the place moves.

TATE
You can read, can't you?

Tramp #1 looks hard at the .454's barrel. He reads.

TRAMP #1
Viceroy.

TATE
Very good.

In a move of equal lightning, Tate re-holsters his weapon. He stands there, defenseless. The tramps don't move.

Tate sits, a certain nobility in his move. He crosses legs.

TATE (CONT'D)
Now. Where were we?

TRAMP #1
Um. Well....we know you like killin'
and murder, and all.

TATE
That's ugly. Sweeten it a bit.

TRAMP #1
We....everyone knows you're not
a'scared to plug a man for nothin'.
So we want you to plug a man.

TATE
Really? Why?

TRAMP #2
He slept with my woman.

TATE
Is that so? And what if I had been
the one who slept with her?

TRAMP #2
I'd probably hire up just the same.

TATE

A man with conviction. What else
has the adulterer brought to the
world?

TRAMP #1

Hell, ain't that enough?

TATE

For some, yes. How much?

TRAMP #1

How much you want?

TATE

Well, let's see. How about...some
sugar cubes. My stallion, he gets a
terrible hankerin' now and then.

A long beat.

TRAMP #1

You'd kill a man for sugar cubes?

TATE

I'd do it for free. But then, how
would I feed my horse?

No one says a word.

TATE (CONT'D)

Where's the victim now? Oh, and his
name is...?

TRAMP #2

Chet. Chet Parker. Lives in a shack
at the edge of town. Runs the night
shift on the telegraph machine.
He's there right now.

TRAMP #1

Yeah. And he's alone.

SAM

Sir, I don't think—

Tate raises a hand.

TATE

Let me think for a moment. Okay,
I'll do it. My sugar?

The tramps look at one another. Tramp #2 goes to the bar.

TRAMP #1

Only one thing: He's expectin' us
to do somethin'. So you best just
go in and talk to him, make like
you're wantin' to send a telegraph,
or he might run.

TATE

We're all tired here. Why not let's
do this tomorrow morning?

Tramp #2 returns.

TRAMP #1

He says he wants to do it tomorrow.

Tramp #2 gives this some thought.

TRAMP #2

Might be better tonight.

TATE

Gentlemen, he's not going anywhere.

Tramp #1 looks for Tramp #2's approval.

TRAMP #2

Come to think of it, if it's light
out there ain't much chance the sum-
bitch'll get away. Sure. Okay.

TATE

Excellent. I'll meet you here
tomorrow morning.

The tramps tip their hats, walk away without a word. Tramp #1 turns back, however, nervously clears his throat.

TATE (CONT'D)

Yes?

TRAMP #1

Why do you call that pistol
"Viceroy"?

TATE

A *viceroy* is a ruler who works for
a single higher power. So while the
Viceroy indeed rules all that is
set before him, he merely does so
as a representative.

TRAMP #1
Who's the Viceroy, then? You, or
that pistol?

TATE
I haven't decided. I'll let you
know when I do.

Snickers from the men. Tramp #1 remains expressionless, turns
and walks away.

SAM
There's somethin' funny, Tate.

COWBOY #1
Yeah, we should hit outta here in
the mornin'.

TATE
We will. Right after I help these
two men with their trouble.

Tate smiles, unseats, tips his hat.

TATE (CONT'D)
Tomorrow, then.

Tate walks away. He passes through the saloon door and into
the howling winds of night.

SAM
He's startin' t'spook me.

COWBOY #1
He's just different.

SAM
Yeah? Well. Long as I get paid.
Long as we all do.

The men drink.

CUT TO:

EXT. BORDER TOWN - NIGHT - EST.

Almost surreal in the windy desolation and moonlight.

INT. SMALL HOTEL ROOM

Tate lies in bed, stares at the ceiling. The sound of wind
frames the room's bleak, diffused pall.

Several beats pass. Tate rolls over, grabs his pocket watch:
12:05 AM.

TATE

Humph.

He sits for a second, pulls a photo from an inner vest pocket. On it is a picture of a lovely blonde WOMAN, perhaps 30, smiling from an aged portrait that clearly shows her place in life as educated, desirable.

Tate places the picture on a small bureau before him. He stares at it completely blank. And continues to stare. A full, uninterrupted minute of screen time passes.

Then he rolls into bed, his face still very blank.

TIME CUT:

INT. HORN SALOON - MORNING

Tate's men are here, seated much as they were before. They drink coffee and whiskey. Sam's not here.

Tate is seen through the saloon window, crossing the grey rainy street outside and approaching. He carries a Park Avenue umbrella.

COWBOY #1

Aw, hell, here he comes.

Tate enters the saloon, closes his umbrella, shakes it off. He comes to the table, joins the men.

TATE

Coffee?

Cowboy #1 pours Tate a coffee in a fancy china cup. He moves it toward him.

TATE (CONT'D)

Now, is that nice?

The cowboy hesitates, and then pours a shot of whiskey in with the coffee.

TATE (CONT'D)

Better. Now, then.

COWBOY #2

Sam's gone, boss.

TATE

Gone?

COWBOY #3

Crawfished. Sum-bitch cut outta here sometime last night. Don't know which direction.

TATE

I see, I see.

On this, the two tramps from the previous night enter from the rain, soaked. They look around, see Tate and his boys. They approach.

TATE (CONT'D)

Mornin', friends.

TRAMP #1

Ain't much o'one.

TATE

Oh, don't let a little rain get you down. So. Are we all set? I'd like to do this and then be on my way.

TRAMP #2

Tell him.

TRAMP #1

Will you hold your Goddamned horses?

(to Tate)

He's across the street. Barber shoppe. Kinda chubby.

TATE

Indeed. Of course, now that he's sitting in a public place, I'll just have to up my fee.

Five Trail Tramps enter the saloon, the same grunts from the previous night. A couple of Tate's men look them over, but otherwise don't pay any mind. The tramps move to the bar.

TRAMP #2

To what?

TATE

Breakfast, for me and my boys.

The five tramps at the bar now have drinks and move to the back of the saloon, where they were last night.

TRAMP #1

Okay.

Tramp #2 removes a bunch of sugar cubes from his pocket, puts them on the table in front of Tate.

TATE

Oh, I never accept payment til the job's done. You just wait here.

Tate unseats, walks to the saloon entrance. He opens his umbrella, moves to the street.

COWBOY #1

Why don't you boys sit down?

TRAMP #1

Nervous, that's all.

Tramp #1 and #2 exchange looks.

Away from the view of Tate's men, Tramp #2 makes eye contact with the five tramps in back.

EXT. STREET

In the medium rain, Tate makes way. He sights the barber shoppe, moves to the wooden sidewalk just outside. He looks in the shoppe window, casually strolls to the shoppe door. He opens, enters.

INT. BARBER SHOPPE

Tate closes the door behind him, collapses his umbrella and shakes it off. He hangs it from a hat stand near the door, walks in.

Here we find a set of four barber chairs. All empty save one, where a slightly chubby MAN with dark hair and blue eyes awaits a shave. He's wearing a bib, his face lathered.

There's no barber. And the man seems to be expect Tate.

On a wall rack between chairs 2 and 3 is a rifle. Above is a frightening and vicious wolf's head, beautifully taxidermed.

TATE

Well, hello there.

CHUBBY MAN

Hi.

Tate moves closer.

TATE
Rumor says you're Chet Parker.

CHUBBY MAN
Yeah, so?

TATE
Well, I—

With an effortless move, the chubby man produces not one but two sawed side-by-side shotguns from under his bib. The muzzles look Tate down.

CHUBBY MAN
It's over, Tate.

Tate shows no emotion. He simply stares at the chubby man, who now unseats from the chair. The man also wears a revolver on a gun belt. Tate smiles, nods.

TATE
Of course I knew this was all just a ruse. The tramps hirin' a gun, and all. Shavin' cream is a nice touch, though.

CHUBBY MAN
If you're so damned smart, what're you doin' standin' there?

TATE
Because I just had to see who it was that thought themselves so clever. And somehow, it had to be you, Stanley.

NOW "STAN BEDFORD"
Tate, it's over. You try and run, I'll burn you down. You make a move, the same.

TATE
And all with those two midget shotguns.

BEDFORD
Reckon so.

TATE
Stanley—

BEDFORD

Cut the *Stanley* shit, Tate. It's Stan, dammit. Now. Unstrap that Colt. Easy like.

TATE

No, I will *not*.

Bedford raises one of the shotguns, fires two blasts into the ceiling. He tosses the spent weapon aside.

INT. SALOON

The sound of discharged shotgun is heard here.

COWBOY #1

Well, there ya go.

TRAMP #2

(whispered to Tramp #1)

That's it.

Tramp #2 nods toward the five tramps in back. All the tramps spring to action, pistols out and ready. The saloon-keeper ducks behind the bar.

TRAMP #2 (CONT'D)

Federal marshals! None of you sum-bitches move! You're all under arrest!

The tramps, now Marshals, spread around Tate's men. One covers the saloon entrance.

COWBOY #1

Well don't this beat all?

MARSHAL #3

(from behind)

Hands on your head! And get on your knees, alla ya!

Tate's men reluctantly and angrily comply.

INT. BARBER SHOPPE

TATE

You shot the roof, Stanley. A signal? My, you never change.

BEDFORD
Wife likes it that way. Take a look
across the street.

Tate becomes noticeably concerned off this, slowly turns and steps toward the window.

Tate can see through the rain a marshal guarding the saloon entrance. And through the saloon window, a vague circle of men surrounding his own.

TATE
I suppose that's it for them.

BEDFORD
Turn around.

Tate does, but is unmoved.

BEDFORD (CONT'D)
Know where you screwed-up? I'll tell ya. You shoulda stayed workin' alone, Tate. How ya think we found ya, all the way the hell out here? One of those dumbass donkeys you hired, that's how. Spoutin'-off all over town.

TATE
I suppose you're right. This year's been fun, but I do move gracefully when I lack encumbrance. Don't much like being in charge, either. Do you like being in charge, Stanley?

BEDFORD
Alright, get that gun belt off. I ain't askin' again.

TATE
Stanley—

BEDFORD
Stan, Goddammit, Stan!

TATE
Marshal. This will not end well for you. You want me alive. Badly. Had you chosen a pistol, maybe a rifle, you might have a chance. A bullet can be aimed and focused, much like God's desire. But a shotgun is very messy, indeed. If I resist, and you hit me, I might well die.

(MORE)

TATE (CONT'D)

This tells me you won't attack at all, unless I try and kill you first. Well, I won't. I like you, marshal. True, you've given me trouble for quite a long time, but I don't wish to see you dead.

BEDFORD

One thing wrong with yer dimestore psychology, Tate: I got a pistol.

TATE

Yes, I can see that. But if you so much as cast a glance at that silly .38 Webley of yours, I'll kill you immediately. Think about your wife for a moment. And your three year-old. And that Dun you so cherish. Think hard, Stanley.

Impasse. Several beats.

TATE (CONT'D)

Your move.

They stare one another down.

INT. SALOON

The marshals keep Tate's men under close watch.

MARSHAL #4

Been long enough. Move these pigs.

MARSHAL #3

(to Tate's men)

Okay now boys, we're gonna disarm ya, so just keep those hands where they are. I see so much as a finger twitch and I'm gonna light me some candles, understand?

Tate's men don't respond. Marshal #3 nods toward what used to be Tramp #1 (now Marshal #1).

Marshal #1 eases up to Tom, gently pulls his two revolvers from their holsters, tosses them to Marshal #2 (was Tramp #2) one at a time.

A tense, silent moment of Marshals staring the men down, and Marshal #1 disarming. As Marshal #1 moves in quiet to XXX, XXX lets go with a quick but noisy passing of gas.

Everyone in the room chuckles a bit.

XXX
Pardon.

Behind the bar, the saloon-keep quietly and slowly rises from his hiding, assesses. No one sees, hears, or notices.

MARSHAL #3
Doggies! Pity the man's got to share a cell with you, XXXX.

XXXXX
Ain't goin' to no cell, marshal.

MARSHAL #3
That so?

The saloon-keeper shakily pours himself a drink from a whisky bottle, watches events.

XXX
Fuck you, marshal.

XXX stands up. This throws the room to tension.

MARSHAL #2
Get back on yer knees, boy, now!

XXX
Kiss my ass.

MARSHAL #3
XXX, if'n you don't get down on the count of three, I'm gonna shoot you where you stand, I shit you not.

XXX
No you ain't.

MARSHAL #3
One...two...

Saloon-keeper finishes his drink. His hand puts the glass on the bar and he pulls his towel to wipe his mouth. In doing, he tips the whiskey bottle. It hits the bar with a clink.

Marshal #1 spins on a heel, shoots the saloon keep through the gut. The old man staggers backward, flops on a rack of bottles, dead.

XXXX
Damn if he didn't shoot the bartender!

XXX
Holy all Jesus.

MARSHAL #3
Shut the hell up! Dave! What the hell's the matter with you, boy?

XXX
Yeah, Dave, what?

MARSHAL #1
I'm sorry, Percy. Christ!

XXXX
All you gotta say is sorry?! You just killed a man, mister!

XXXX (CONT'D)
Get a rope!

XXXX (CONT'D)
Nah, hangin's too good for him.

MARSHAL #3
Shut up! Just shut the hell up, alla ya! XXX! What's goin' on across the street, Goddammit?!

MARSHAL #2
Aw, be quiet, Dave. Sheriff signaled, didn't he? Big question here is, what about the bartender?

MARSHAL #3
Dammit, get over across the street and see what's goin' on!

XXXX moves out the door and into the rainy street. XXX stares with utter disgust and hatred at Marshal #3, who's trying like hell to keep the situation together.

XXX spits tobacco onto Marshal #1's boots.

XXXX
Whoops.

INT. BARBER SHOPPE

Tate and Bedford have heard the gunshot. Bedford is tense, but Tate appears completely relaxed.

TATE

Oh, dear. A single shot would have
to mean I just lost a man. That is,
unless someone went wild and shot
the bartender.

Bedford isn't as comfortable in the realm of logic, and his tension shows. Slow footsteps are heard on the outside walk.

XXXX (O.S.)

Marshal?! It's XXXX. You alright?

BEDFORD

I'm fine, XXXX. Gimme a minute.

XXXXX (O.S.)

We've got a man down here, marshal!
It's the bartender!

Tate and Bedford share a look.

TATE

Easy come, easy go.

BEDFORD

Do what you can, XXXX. I'll be out
in a minute.

Footsteps recede from the walk.

TATE

Will you, marshal?

BEDFORD

Last time I'm askin', Tate: Take
the gun belt off.

TATE

Or else what?

The two adversaries are frozen in their respective positions.
A couple beats then...

Tate, in a trademark move, draws his pistol with crazy agility. He's got a dead-bead on Bedford's brow.

Both are statues: Bedford ready with his shotgun, Tate with pistol pointed. Bedford's face tightens. Tate smiles wide.

TATE (CONT'D)

Why didn't you shoot, Stanley?

BEDFORD

Don't know, Tate. Don't rightly
know.

TATE

I see. Well, shall we stand here
like this forever, or do we move to
the next level?

BEDFORD

Up to you.

Tate dives to the floor. Bedford fires his shotgun, misses, wood flies. Tate sweeps his legs under Bedford's feet, knocks the Marshal to the ground. Hard.

Tate jumps on Bedford, sticks the business end of his pistol against the man's right jugular. Bedford freezes.

With his left hand, Tate snatches the small shotgun from Bedford's grip. He then puts the shotgun's twin muzzle against the marshal's lips.

TATE

Say, "Ah."

The marshal won't budge.

TATE (CONT'D)

Stubborn man.

Tate raises the shotgun up beside his own head and fires harmlessly into the roof. He tosses the shotgun aside, then pulls his auxiliary .44, touches it to his own lips.

A single approaching footfall scuffles O.S. Tate does not look that way, but his right brow rises.

Without looking for a target, Tate extends his pistol that direction, closes his eyes, seems to be counting under his breath. Tate's hand moves his pistol horizontally, tracking some unseen presence.

Without opening his eyes or breaking forward concentration, Tate fires twice. The shots pierce the wood of the wall near the shoppe door. A huge thud sounds O.S.

BEDFORD

You ain't human, Tate. Can't be.

TATE

No, Marshal.

(holsters backup .44)

(MORE)

TATE (CONT'D)

I'm human alright. That's the problem.

With Viceroy pistol still pressed to Bedford's neck, Tate unsheathes a hunting knife. He kisses the blade gently, then presses the knife against his own right shoulder. He saws slightly, blood spreads across his shirt in a small patch.

He shows Bedford the blade.

TATE (CONT'D)

See? I bleed.

(beat)

Let's find out if you do.

INT. SALOON

Intense. With all marshals on full alert, Tate's men, sweating in dread, now cluster in a neat row, disarmed, hands on head, all on their knees.

MARSHAL #1

Somethin' ain't normal, XXX.

MARSHAL #2

Reckon you're right. If Bedford and Xxx ain't back here in two minutes, you and Xxx get on across the street and find Winston.

Marshal #4 nods, leaves. All quiet. Several beats of O.S. rainfall, tense stares, shadows, fear.

A tinkle of glass is heard as a single gunshot breaks a windowpane. The shot finds XXXX's forehead, he sprawls backward dead as a doornail.

MARSHAL #1

Holy shit!

Another tinkle of glass, and XXXX takes a shot in the right cheekbone, the bloody back of his head showers against XXXX.

XXXX

Aw, hell!

MARSHAL #3

Everybody down!

They all hit the floor. The marshals take half-assed tactical positions as Tate's last two men scramble to escape.

Marshal #1 sights XXX as he dashes for the bar. XXX takes a shot in his spine, falls to the ground, yowling.

Over XXXX's screams, another bullet snipes through the window at extreme angle. It tears through Marshal #2's shoulder, destroying his arm socket. His agony is not quiet.

With two men screaming and the sound of falling rain, the place is a symphony of despair.

XXX, the last of Tate's men, hides under a table. The remaining Marshals, less one because of #3's injury, now scuttle to defensive spots.

MARSHAL #1
Somebody's gotta get out there.

MARSHAL #2
Gonna take two.

MARSHAL #3
(over his pain)
Damn right it will! You and XXXX!
And spread yourselves out!

Marshal #1 and #2 hunch down and rush the front door. A couple beats later and one of them dashes back in, takes cover behind the bar.

XXXX is silent. He slowly lies face-down in a pool of crimson surrounding the floor beneath his pelvis.

MARSHAL #4
XXXX! XXXX! What the hell? Did ya see 'im?!

No response. Marshal #3 and #4 look at each other, fright in their eyes. There's a couple odd thuds, and a dragging sound. A bottle of whiskey moves about.

Marshal #4 peeks up and around his hiding place.

Sitting on the bar, with his hand on a bottle of rye, is the saloon-keeper. His head is down, his body a bit wobbly. His free hand is in his lap, near the blood on his shirt.

MARSHAL #4 (CONT'D)
What the hell?

MARSHAL #3
What is it?

MARSHAL #4
The bartender. He's alive.

MARSHAL #3
Well. Good for him.

MARSHAL #4
We gotta help him.

Marshal #4 get up, goes to the bar.

MARSHAL #3
Get back here, XXX!

Marshal #4 nears the saloon-keeper, who in the dim light appears to be suffering his wounds, shaking about a bit, looking at the ground.

MARSHAL #4
Sir? You okay?

The saloon-keep coughs.

MARSHAL #4 (CONT'D)
Lemme help ya, old-timer.

Marshal #4 walks toward the saloon-keeper. The old man's free hand rises, and in it is Viceroy.

A single shot hits Marshal #4 square in the nose, a cone of gore splashes the air.

Marshal #4 is done. Viceroy slips back to the dark behind the bar, along with the hand that controls it.

The saloon tender's long dead body crumbles back to rest, spilling the whiskey bottle in the same.

Marshal #3 stays hidden, holds his bloody shoulder.

MARSHAL #3
Tate? I know it's you. I'm sure my boys out there heard the shot. So you better—

TATE (O.S.)
The rain's heavier now, Marshal.
I'm sure they didn't hear.

Tate's footfalls approach, ominously.

MARSHAL #3
(trembly)
You hit me real good, Tate. If'n I don't bleed to death, I sure ain't gonna be—

Tate suddenly appears before marshal #3, Viceroy pointed at the man's face.

TATE
Felicitations.

They stare at one another a couple beats...

MARSHAL #3
Do it. Go on!

TATE
No. Not today.

With this, Tate walks away. The Marshal listens but does not see as Tate's footfalls cross the saloon. We HEAR an AD-LIBed pleading from XXX, who was still in hiding. And then we HEAR a childlike shrieking, and a gurgle.

In a moment, Tate's footfalls again cross the saloon, move out the entrance and down the rainy walk.

EXT. ALLEY

Marshal #1 slinks down an alley beside the barber shoppe. Rain falls more intensely than before. He cautiously picks his way through.

EXT. OPPOSITE ALLEY

In the alley on the other side of the barber, Marshal #2 curses the rainfall, carefully moves from his cover behind large barrels.

There's a sound above him: a window slides.

TATE
Oh, marshal? Do come inside, out of the rain.

Marshal #2 peeks from behind his barrel, and up. He sees Tate in a second-story window, waving at him. The marshal immediately fires, hits the sill next to Tate.

TATE (CONT'D)
Drat, you missed. But come in and get me, just the same.

The marshal seems a bit puzzled, the window slams shut. Marshal #1 moves out.

EXT. BACK OF BARBER SHOPPE

The two marshals encounter one another at virtually the same instant, raising their weapons but quickly seeing they're friends. They move to one another, hugging the back wall.

MARSHAL #1
He's inside, upstairs.

MARSHAL #2
Hell. Whaddaya think?

MARSHAL #1
Don't matter, front or back.

MARSHAL #2
Alright, then.

Marshal #1 gingerly opens the barber shoppe back door. It creaks a bit. Inside is murky gloom, a clear vision of the barber chair. But no Bedford.

The rifle mounted between chairs #2 and #3 is gone. There's a stair to the right.

MARSHAL #1
Easy, now.

In they go.

INT. BARBER SHOPPE

They scan about. Like feathers they mount the stairs, revolvers and rifle at ready.

INT. BARBER'S APARTMENT

Once on top of the stairs, they enter the barber's living quarters. Cozy. Tate is not here.

MARSHAL #1
Dammit.

They check around, Marshal #2 moves to a street-side window.

MARSHAL #2
Holy shit. C'mere, XXX.

Marshal #1 moves to the window with Marshal #2. Outside, in the middle of the street, is a rope-bound and gagged Bedford, strapped to a dining-room chair. He's very much alive and uselessly struggling.

A wooden plunking sound behind the marshals: A double stick of dynamite is tossed from downstairs and into the apartment.

They turn in time to see the fizzing fuse, which was purposely cut very short.

EXPLOSION.

EXT. STREET

The entire second floor of the barber shoppe is decimated. The weakened structure caves-in completely. It burns, but the rains keep the fires away.

Debris drops from the sky. When all is quiet, Tate appears, rifle in one hand, Viceroy in the other. He walks to Bedford.

TATE

Marshal Bedford, it's been a pleasure. But I must now leave this place of sin, moving onward to glories untold.

Bedford can't respond, because he's gagged

TATE (CONT'D)

Oh. Allow me.

Tate rips the gag from Bedford's mouth. Bedford stares.

BEDFORD

You got no soul, Winston. What you did here is somethin'—

TATE

Sweet marshal. What I did here today is just...business as usual.

INT. SALOON

Marshal #3 struggles to his feet, tries to see what happened outside. He's in true pain, quickly gets a view of the destroyed barber shoppe. And Tate with Bedford.

Without a word, Marshal #3 drops back to the ground, crawls toward his rifle, gets it awkwardly in hand.

EXT. STREET

Tate squats in front of Bedford, regards him.

BEDFORD
Where we at, Tate?

Sound of thunder in the deep distance.

TATE
Stanley, none of this matters.
Nothing at all. This and this and
this. We're all gonna die. And what
are we, anyway?

Bedford just stares.

TATE (CONT'D)
Yes, I didn't expect you'd answer.

Tate stands.

INT. SALOON

Marshal #3 is now at the broken window, rifle aimed at Tate. The marshal's in agony, his hands and face bloody. He holds his breath, eyes watering. He lines-up, lines-up, squeezes...

EXT. STREET

TATE
I'll be off now, Stanley. But one
more thing...

A shot.

Tate takes a riffle bullet through his back, at the top of his right shoulder blade. He's spun 360°, slams to the ground. Viceroy goes flying.

Face down, he bleeds badly. But he stands, struggles to get away, the riffle still in his left hand.

BEDFORD
Hit him again! Get him!

INT. SALOON

Marshal #3, collapsed at the window, breaths unconsciousness.

EXT. STREET

BEDFORD

Hope he got you good, Tate! Hope it
hurts somethin' terrible!

Tate staggers away from Bedford, toward an alley entrance.

TATE

That it does, Stanley. But I shall
...overcome.

BEDFORD

Don't think so, partner. You won't
get two miles, bleedin' like that.

Tate walks away from Bedford.

TATE

It's a contest, then.

(stops, turns)

See you at the end of the rainbow,
Sheriff. Beware the gold.

Tate moves off.

BEDFORD

Tate, you son-of-a-bitch! Aw, hell.

EXT. ALLEY

Tate struggles through the alley, blood covering his right side. He leans occasionally on the walls, trips, falters.

He stares into a rainy sky, smiles, then presses on.

INT. STABLE

Dry and dark. Stable door suddenly opens, in stumbles Tate.

Here are the gang's horses, Tate's amazing stallion among them. Tate gets himself to his horse's gate, levels the rifle at his horse's head.

TATE

Through you they would indeed find
me. Goodbye, old friend.

Tate fires, kills the horse. He moves to another, a Dun. He opens the stall gate, falls into a sitting position, clearly weakened by loss of blood.

TATE (CONT'D)

Oh, come now. Can't be bothered by
all this.

He heavily comes to his feet.

TATE (CONT'D)

Now, then. Saddle.

EXT. STABLE

The stable door opens, and out steps the Dun, with Tate semi-slumped in the saddle. Tate's rifle is stashed on the saddle's side holster.

Tate leans close to the Dun's ear.

TATE

Thataway.

As the Dun trots away from town, Tate summons the strength to pull his hunting knife. In a fast move, he clumsily but efficiently cuts away all the fabric from around the rifle shot. His wounded shoulder is thus exposed, the rain works to dilute the bloody hole.

TATE (CONT'D)

Be cleansed.

His energies spent, Tate collapses on the Dun's neck, drops the knife.

Like a baby clinging to a mother, Tate holds the Dun as it trots away into a glum and rainy morning. Off they go, til they're no longer seen.

EXT. DESERT/MOUNTAINS - SERIES OF SHOTS - AFTERNOON

Tate in varied states of distress while riding/fast-walking the Dun through rainy deserts, flooded ravines, more and more hilly terrain, intense rain whilst waiting under a tree.

EXT. MOUNTAININSIDE - DUSK

Rains have finally gone, a striking sunset peeks through trailing storm clouds.

Tate is ghastly pale, barely conscious in the Dun's saddle. He's fully slumped over, his bare shoulder black with bruising, but mostly clear of blood.

The Dun walks slowly up an incline that leads from sparse trees and hills, below to a more forested mountainside.

The Dun picks through the treeline, slowly finds its way until it comes to and abrupt drop. At least a hundred feet to a flat valley area below.

Tate suddenly comes to. He looks around, dazed.

TATE
(sniffing)
Biscuits?

He slips off the Dun, flops very painfully to the ground. He lies there, shoulder in agony.

TATE (CONT'D)
I'm done in, Mr. Horse. Cut down in my best years.

The Dun just sort of looks at him, cocks an ear toward the valley below. An operatic VOICE is heard faintly O.S. Tate hears it too, and with a burst of energy crawls to the canyon's edge for a look.

Below and in the near-distance there lies a ranch house. The place is built to support a few farm animals and a tiny field. Grey smoke puffs from a chimney.

Tate is alert. He scratches at his vest, pulls a small silver telescope, extends it, has a look.

In the growing dusk a MEXICAN MAN, 52, stands off to the side of the ranch house. He sings an opera tune, in Spanish. Before him are three burning lanterns, set in a neat row.

TATE (CONT'D)
Fancies himself a man of the stage.

Tate scans the ranch house grounds.

TATE (CONT'D)
It would appear the master of the house is away, Mr. Horse. And left a single man in charge.

Tate stands, struggles toward the rifle on his saddle. He gets it, cocks it, lays back in a shooting position.

Shouldering is a huge task, but Tate's will is absolute. He lines on the opera man. Compensates for drop and distance. Tate fires. A beat, and the opera man drops dead on impact.

EXT. RANCH HOUSE - NEAR DARK

Tate rides ever so slightly taller in the saddle, still quite weak. He and the Dun approach the dead opera man, Tate tips his hat respectfully at the body, moves on toward the house.

At the porch, Tate painfully dismounts and staggers up the small stairs into the front door.

INT. RANCH HOUSE

A few candles light this roomy and comfortably appointed home: Paintings, books, mirrors, fabric and leather furniture, a Ben Frank stove, a hearth.

Coming alive, Tate sniffs the air again. He moves toward...

INT. RANCH KITCHEN

Clean, neat. On a wood-burning oven he sees his prize: Beans in a skillet, messed with bacon.

TATE

Mercy!

He attacks the beans, shovels them in his mouth. A strip of bacon hangs on his jaw a couple beats, but is quickly sucked to his gullet.

Beans catch on his beard and mustache as he scoops wild. His eyes scan the stove as he gobble. He sees something.

He pushes the beans aside, grabs a towel and throws open the oven door. Inside is a large rack of browned biscuits.

TATE (CONT'D)

And the meek shall gladly inherit.

Tate literally tears a handful of biscuit dough off the tray, eats like an animal. He turns, heads toward the basin, finds a water bag. He tips high, water gurgles down his throat and all over the floor.

INT. RANCH LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Under dying candle light, Tate lies nude on a sofa, his shoulder now bandaged and dressed. The hearth burns strong, shadows play on the rifle and revolver beside him.

Tate stares at the ceiling, eyes cold and empty.

Tate sits up, careful of his shoulder. On a table before him is a large swath of linen. A sling. He puts it on, secures his arm. He walks nude across the wooden floor.

This is quite a nice home, indeed. Tate opens the front door, steps into the night.

EXT. RANCH HOUSE

Tate walks a couple steps down the porch, finds himself standing under a sky sparkling with the unhindered radiance of stars and a half moon. He stares at the beauty, glances over at the dying opera lanterns and the dead singer.

TATE
I am a lucky man.

He returns to the house.

EXT. RANCH HOUSE - NIGHT

The half moon is quite a bit lower in the sky.

INT. RANCH HOUSE

Tate is on the sofa, the hearth nearly burned out. He sleeps beneath a thick cover of blankets, the topmost being a colorful Navajo weave.

Noise O.S. wakes him. Fighting. The conflict of animals.

Tate stirs. The snarling and barking becomes more fitful, and Tate stiffly gets to his feet, slings his arm, wraps himself in a blanket, and moves through the house.

INT. RANCH BEDROOM

Tate enters this cleanly assigned room. He moves to a window that looks out to the front area of the ranch. He observes with curiosity the battle below.

Coyotes tear into the singer's corpse, their moonlit, bluish silhouettes dart and dance across the yard.

Tate beholds the carnage with passive interest. As the coyotes eat, he finally turns away and leaves the room.

EXT. RANCH HOUSE - MORNING - EST.

First light spreads through the ranch yard. The singer's decimated carcass has all but vanished: A skull minus jaw, several bones, shredded pants and shirt remain.

The Dun Tate rode with meanders in the middle distance.

INT. RANCH LIVING ROOM

Tate, asleep. He wakes, eyes rapidly focus. He turns on his side, winces. He lifts the covers, his wound has bled on both sides in the night. But not badly.

INT. RANCH KITCHEN - LATER

Tate, shirtless, stands over the cookstove, prepares bacon, biscuits, beans in a mixing pan. He stares at the food, shuffles the pan a bit.

EXT. RANCH BACK PORCH - LATER

Tate eats, wrapped in a blanket. He chews slowly, mindlessly stares forward.

He loses a partial spoonful of beans on his mass of beard. He stops what he's doing, wipes the spill with a napkin.

Tate thinks for a moment, strokes the dense hair of his beard and mustache. He stands, leaves the blanket and food behind.

INT. RANCH LATRINE - LATER

A large straight razor and a pair of scissors are placed methodically on a countertop by Tate's left hand. There's an O.S. frothy sound and then a brush and crucible appear, filled with shaving cream.

We then see Tate, his long hair in a pony tail, his beard and mustache heavily lathered. He beholds his image in a silver and gold-backed mirror, sighs deeply, picks up the scissors.

Tate cuts away a large section of beard, puts the scissor down. Then with his shoulder in obvious pain, he picks up and lifts the razor to his face, makes a swipe above the beard he'd cut.

INT. BATH - A BIT LATER

Tate's hand puts the cream and hair-covered razor back on the counter. There's an O.S. splashing and we follow Tate's hands to a towel. The towel goes to his face, and he pats it.

Tate pulls the towel away, his face shaven expertly clean.

Yes, Tate's previous appearance was utterly erased. Where shrubs of hair once clouded his presence, there stands now a shockingly debonair, dashingly attractive man. Tate's sharp, refined features are perhaps those of European royalty, with gracefully sunken cheeks and a manly jaw.

Tate looks at himself side to side. He smiles.

TATE

Oh. There you are.

He studies himself a moment, shakes his head.

TATE (CONT'D)

But no. Not yet.

He takes the scissors in hand, grabs the entire length of his pony tail, begins cutting it off.

(DRAFT INCOMPLETE)